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# Georgia Southern Earns "Colleges That Do Football Right" Title

*Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal recognizes university*



Football | 10/23/2016 7:40:00 PM

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**STATESBORO** - Georgia Southern was recently named as one of the "Colleges That Do Football Right" by Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal. Among these schools are East Carolina University, Mississippi State, Washington, Kansas State and Montana. These school have standing traditions that they have kept throughout their rise in college football.

When the football program made the jump from FCS to FBS in 2014, athletic director [Tom Kleinlein](#) had one goal in mind, how to keep up with the bigger universities without sacrificing long standing traditions. "We're constantly asking how we look, smell, feel like we belong at the FBS level, while staying connected to our traditions and maintaining that family atmosphere," he said.

When asked about his favorite part of game day, Kleinlein answered with "It has to be when Freedom, our bald eagle, flies into the stadium just before our team runs out. That's pretty special." Freedom's flight occurs minutes before the Georgia Southern football team is welcomed to the field, and has been named among the most exciting 30 seconds in college football.

Something unique to Paulson Stadium is the Field of Dreams. "The little kids playing football on that hill goes back generations," Kleinlein said. "Field of Dreams took its place. It's fairly new, but it's a connection to the past." Fans used to gather on the hill where the Ted Smith Family Football Center is now standing.

The biggest part of game day in Statesboro is the yellow school buses. Many schools have charter buses that will pick up players before they head to a spirit walk of some type. When Erk Russell revived the football program in the early 1980s, he needed a way to get his players to the games. Those yellow school buses became part of the identity of the football team, as they rode from the football offices across campus like a parade to Paulson Stadium.

"When we played in our first bowl game last season in Mobile, the team rode everywhere in these nice climate-controlled buses," Kleinlein said. "But when they came out of the hotel on game day, we had arranged for these yellow school buses to take them to the stadium. They saw the buses and went nuts. Our fans went nuts. "It's another way for us to say, 'yes we've arrived as an FBS school, but we're not going to forget what got us here.'"

Georgia Southern returns to Paulson Stadium this Thursday as the Eagles host conference rival Appalachian State in a Thursday night showdown at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available and can be purchased [here](#).

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